DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 158 512 EC 111 913

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TITLE Northville Public Schools/Institution Special Education Program: Comprehensive Administrative Planning.
PUB DATE Jun 78
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the World Congress on Future Special Education (First, Stirling, Scotland, June 25 - July 1, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Programs; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Legislation; *Handicapped Children; *Institutionalized Persons; *Mainstreaming; Program Descriptions; *Public Schools
IDENTIFIERS *Michigan (Northville)

ABSTRACT

The paper describes the Northville (Michigan) Public Schools' program for providing education to approximately 750 handicapped students living in two major residential institutions. Legislation underlying the program's development is reviewed, operation of the educational program is discussed, and statistics on program staff and students are presented. It is explained that within the public schools, four special classes have been located and mainstreamed into an existing elementary and junior high building, with four individual students having been placed within the K-12 system due to their ability levels. (Author/SBH)

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NORTHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS/INSTITUTION SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

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29 June 1978

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THE INSTITUTION SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Historical Perspective

The Northville Public Schools, Northville, Michigan, has accepted the responsibility for providing the educational program for approximately 750 handicapped students who live in two major residential institutions, the Plymouth Center for Human Development and the Northville Residential Training Center; both within the geographic boundaries of that public school system. To appreciate the impact that this program has had within the Northville Public Schools and within the County Intermediate District, it is necessary to have an understanding of the legal process out of which this program arose.

Public Act 198

The most powerful aspect of this process was and is the State Mandatory Special Education Act, Public Act 198, which was signed into law in December of 1971. It was this law which gave impetus to the special education program in Northville. Public Act 198 has three major provisions:

1. It requires local school districts to provide special education programs and services to all handicapped persons through age 25 who have not completed a normal course of study and graduated from high school.

2. It establishes procedures for accountability in providing programs and services for these handicapped persons.

3. It requires that plans for the delivery of special education programs and services be written by the state and intermediate school district.

Even before Act 198, however, legislative movement toward better education for the handicapped had begun. In 1969, the legislature adopted a statute (Public Act 220) which required local and intermediate school districts to conduct a survey to determine the number of handicapped persons, ages 0 to 25, in their respective districts. The State Board of Education collected this data and disclosed statewide

results in February of 1971. Public Act 220 also required local school districts to develop a plan for meeting the educational needs of the handicapped persons identified in the Act. Significantly, this law made little or no provision for those handicapped children housed in state institutions. Even the 1971 Act made only the barest provision for these children. The only reference to institutionalized handicapped students is a section that provides: "(the Department of Education) must cooperate with the Michigan Department of Mental Health in providing educational programs and services to those handicapped children in state institutions so that such programs may be brought into compliance with Public Act 198 of 1971."

Public Act 198 was a strong statement; but, as so often happens, it did not insure the provision of necessary funds, nor did it force implementation of special education programs for institutionalized children. Therefore, in 1975 a lawsuit was begun by the Michigan Association for Retarded Citizens (MARC) to make special education a reality for the institutionally handicapped. Even before the litigation was resolved, a directive for implementation was prepared by personnel from the Michigan Department of Mental Health and the State Board of Education; that directive was acceptable to the MARC in most respects. However, it did not place the operation of the program under the umbrella of the State Board of Education; instead, left it to the Mental Health Department. The MARC continued to press for the educational responsibility of the handicapped to be placed with the State Board of Education.

Ironically, when the two departments agreed to this transfer of educational responsibility, a strong lobbying effort by professionals responsible for the treatment of the emotionally impaired balked. They demanded that the educational responsibility for this population should remain with the state institution housing them, under the auspices of the Mental Health Department. A

compromise was reached and today mandated education for the institutional mentally retarded is the responsibility of local and county intermediate school districts, while the Mental Health Department continues to be responsible for educating institutionalized emotionally impaired. No challenge of this split responsibility for educational programming has yet been organized in behalf of the institutionalized emotionally impaired in Michigan.

Section 53

Educational programming for institutionalized handicapped students gained two additional legal buttresses. In the Spring of 1975, the Michigan School Education Act was amended to include Section 53, guaranteeing the educational rights of the institutionalized handicapped children in ten State institutions. Section 53 guaranteed funding, in fact at 100%, through the County Intermediate School Districts. This actually created a dilemma however, in that K-12 Special Education students were eligible under a different section, Section 52, which, through a variety of 'double dipping' formula mechanisms, provided only 50-55% funding, with the remainder being the fiscal responsibility of the local districts.

The funding issues create obvious problems. The Section 53 institutional programs are viewed as 'golden Cadillacs', whereas the Section 52 public school programs are viewed as 'reconditioned Volkswagens'. Difficulties exist in establishing program boundaries and understanding with general education within the local district. Difficulties also exist with the K-12 Special Education programs, due to these funding issues.

Public Law 94-142

Public Law 94-142, signed in 1975 by President Ford, has supported these programs further; solidifying their position at the local level and within the state plan. This law has allowed implementation via team meetings of Individual Education Plans for each student. In the Northville program, through Grant money,

(primarily Title I), it has allowed the development of a program curriculum specifically designed to meet the needs of these students and a program health policies book.

The Educational Program: Its Operation

The process has been a difficult legal one and continues to provide ample challenges for all involved. Not only do these children have special needs, but their's are compounded by their institutional residency and their unusual histories. The program which Northville Public Schools undertook was enormous.

The Northville Public Schools General Education system is composed of 4300 students, located in a rural suburban setting. The community is comprised of predominantly white middle-class to upper-middle class, white collar families. Added to this local school population are now approximately 750-800 institutionalized handicapped students from 0-25 years of age.

The program began by leasing six buildings from surrounding districts which are facing declining enrollments. This allowed for the financially frugal provision of school sites but, more importantly, it allowed the students to be philosophically and morally invited into those districts.

Breakdown of Program Sites is as follows:

Annex - Northville - 8 classrooms, labeled as multi-cap, serving blind retarded and blind-deaf retarded - 74 students.
Also connected with this program in the general education buildings: 1) Moraine - two multi-cap TMI classes - 14 students; 2) Cooke Junior High - 1 SMI classroom and 1 multi-cap TMI classroom - 15 students.

Brainard - Crestwood School District - 6 SMI classrooms; 7 classrooms for multi-cap, one of which is TMI multi-cap - 145 students.

Burger - Garden City - 5 SMI classrooms, 3 classrooms for deaf/trainable, 5 TMI classrooms, 1 EMI classroom - 174 students.

Infirmary Program - on Plymouth Center for Human Development grounds - Northville - 7 multi-cap classrooms and one homebound hospitalized program - 66 students

Parkway - North Dearborn Heights - 6 SMI classrooms - 140 students.

Taft - Livonia - 4 SMI classrooms, 4 multi-cap classrooms, 1 TMI classroom - 115 students.

TOTAL STUDENTS - 743

All buildings have identical staffing configurations - from administrators to classroom teachers and instructional aides, to full complement of ancillary staff. A more complete breakdown of entire staffing is as follows:

Administrators	9	Nurses	6	AV Technician	1
Teachers	72	Dietitian	1	Bus Drivers & Aides	62
Instructional Aides	174	Research/Development Consultant	1	Mechanics	2
TSLIs - 10; TSLI Aides	20			Kitchen Staff	37
Psychologists	3	Community Awareness Coordinator	1	Custodians	3
Behavior Management Aides	8			Professional Substitute Teachers	13
Occupational Therapists	9	Perceptual Motor Specialist	1		
COTAs	5			Paraprofessional Substitutes	36
Physical Therapists	2	Secretarial/Clerical	16		

TOTAL STAFF - 467

To say the least, it was 'bedlam' when this program was kicked off in December of 1975. The mistakes remind one of one's shopping list at the grocery store; however, to highlight a few:

1. I, as the Director, was hired last and then not until August of 1976.
2. During the months of December 1975 and January 1976, a number of professional staff of Northville Public Schools and the Wayne County Intermediate School District hired some two hundred staff within two weeks.
3. They were operating out of existing facility space at the Plymouth Center for Human Development and one school building within the Northville Public Schools.
4. No rules and regulations were ever processed or written by the Michigan Department of Education.
5. No legal contract was drafted between the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Education; in fact that is still pending.
6. Ad infinitum.

However, we have managed now in a year and a half to come out of the doldrums and create what we firmly believe to be a very exciting, creative, innovative program, serving the needs of the institutionalized handicapped children from 0-26 years of age, presenting every known handicap in the 'book' and some that are not yet in any 'book'.

Other issues that we have accomplished 'out of sheer desperation' are:

1. Medical Health Policies that a sub-committee worked on, people representing both institutions we serve, Plymouth Center for Human Development and Northville Residential Training Center, and our staff. These policies are rather inclusive and extremely definitive, reflecting our concerns, via our nurses and medical consultant, as to how best we as educators can serve these children, be the problem hepatitis, shigella, scabies, et al.

2. Another worthwhile project is our Transportation Department. We have been able to organize the kind of transportation needs that these children present, i.e. number of buses, types of buses, inservice training for bus drivers and bus aides, CB radio vs. FM transmitter station, etc.

3. Our food program and the fact that feeding is an integral part of our program, both from a humanistic point of view and from a pragmatic point of view, is significant. We have refused to go with a 'plastic' processing company, but rather maintain a 'Mom's kitchen' idea. To this end, we have made a wise decision.

4. During this year, we are tackling problems via inservice on topics such as:

   a. "Death and Dying", as a phenomena for the handicapped - how staff can work through this situation.

   b. "Sex" as a human right of the handicapped,

   c. "Burn-Out" effect on professional and paraprofessional staffs working with this type of high risk students for the entire academic year, which in Michigan is 230 days and 1150 clock hours.

   d. Reviewing the implications and impact of P.L. 94-142; the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, Section 504; the Barrier-Free Design Act; et al.

These are just a few of the kinds of things we are trying to understand and face up to.

Awareness Experiment: The Beginning

In its development, this Northville program has been one continuous awareness experiment. The attempt is to have institutionalized handicapped students better recognized, understood and accepted in local communities. These awareness efforts have been felt and have focused upon: 1) the K-12 local system, 2) the Northville Board of Education, 3) the County Intermediate School system, 4) the residential institutions, and 4) the State.

Within the Northville Public Schools, four special classes have been located and mainstreamed into an existing elementary and junior high building. Additionally, four individual students have been placed within the K-12 system due to their ability levels. In the Fall of 1978, more classrooms will be incorporated into the mainstream of the high school.

The unique nature, size and scope of this program makes it both a 'joy and a wonder' to the local Board of Education. The awareness tasks with this body of people are immense. Various program highlights have helped this effort. During the 1977-78 school year a complete curriculum was published and copyrighted. This is a continually evolving document, updated and revised yearly, containing material in ten volumes. A second book was also published and copyrighted during the year; a Health Policies book that describes in detail procedures and policies for effectively dispensing health matters, such as communicable diseases, logged daily injuries, emergency measures, et al. Both of these can clearly be viewed as 'labors of love' on the part of the staff. The program soon will announce the incorporation of a computer which will be used in scientific research to assist non-verbal severe and profoundly handicapped students in the production and development of language. The perceptual motor room in the program infirmary constitutes another area of research. The concepts there center around infusing the environment with physical modalities which allow infirm, severe and profoundly handicapped students the opportunity to explore, through manipulation of the environment. Personnel hope to publish material regarding this approach in the next academic year, since they have experienced significant success in eliminating self-abusive behaviors in this experimental room.

Awareness efforts are affecting the County Intermediate District level also. Program personnel have had an active involvement with the thirty-six Special Education Directors of the County. In 1978-79, for the first time, the County plan, which is required by law, will describe the program for the institutionalized

students. The size and scope of the program has so influenced the Intermediate School District that negotiations are underway for the Northville ISEP to assume the additional responsibility for the education of an additional 63-100 severely mentally handicapped students who live at home within the northwest boundary of Wayne County.

Relationships with personnel at the two residential institutions have required major awareness efforts. Realizing the fact that institutional personnel were not supportive of the shift of educational responsibilities to the Department of Education, it has been critical to maintain an open, forthright, cooperative approach to realistically view the shared responsibility. To this end, a 'Triad' Committee was formed in 1976 as a forum for discussion and decision making. A delegate and an alternate representing each institution and school, plus a parent representative, constitute this group. Minutes have been kept of the meetings and a unique legend has been designed which allows communication, direction and historical efforts to be recorded and the responsibility for action assigned. Throughout its history, the 'Triad' has attempted to solve problems and nurture an awareness of the issues confronting each of the agencies.

The awareness experiment has extended, finally, to the State level where the ten directors of programs for institutionalized students have organized an informal, but politically active, group to insure the rights of the handicapped students; known as (ARSEP) Administrators of Residential Special Education Programs. This group has finally received official staffing ratios to operate the Section 53 programs. They are anxiously awaiting final legal agreements that establish effective lines of responsibility between the School System and the Institutions.

The challenge and complexities of this educational program for the institutionalized students may appear obvious; the skills needed to work with these extremely handicapped students enormous and our commitment unending.